

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03

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FM USLO PEKING

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2093

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

USINT ALGIERS

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

S E C R E T PEKING 1188

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CH, UR

SUBJECT: SINO-SOVIET BORDER TALKS

1. AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADOR FITZGERALD AND NEW ZEALAND AMBASSADOR HARLAND HAD LUNCH JULY 11 WITH ALGERIAN AMBASSADOR TALEB, DURING WHICH LATTER SPOKE WITH APPARENT AUTHORITY ON STATE OF SINO-SOVIET BORDER TALKS SINCE RETURN OF SOVIET NEGOTIATOR ILICHEV TO PEKING. AS OF JULY 11, TALEB SAID, ONE PROCEDURAL AND ONE SUBSTANTIVE MEETING HAD TAKEN PLACE, WITH ANOTHER MEETING ANTICIPATED FOR AFTERNOON OF JULY 16.

2. ACCORDING TO TALEB, AND CONTRARY TO WHAT CHINESE HAVE TOLD OTHERS SUCH AS ROMANIAN DCM AND CANADIAN AMBASSADOR, ILICHEV DID BRING PACKAGE OF NEW PROPOSALS WITH HIM. TALEB DID NOT KNOW NATURE OF THESE NEW PROPOSALS, BUT SEEMD QUITE CERTAIN THAT THEY IN FACT EXISTED.

3. TALEB ALSO SAID WITHOUT ANY HINT AS TO SOURCE THAT
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CHINESE HAVE FOR THEIR PART WITHDRAWN, OR PERHAPS MORE PROPERLY

"NO LONGER INSIST ON", PRECONDITION IN TALKS REQUIRING SOVIETS TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT RUSSIANS ACQUIRED LARGE AMOUNTS OF CHINESE TERRITORY AS RESULT OF UNEQUAL TREATIES. TALEB WAS NOT SURE WHETHER THIS CHANGE IN CHINESE POSITION HAD OCCURRED BEFORE OR AFTER ILICHEV'S RETURN, BUT BELIEVED IN ANY EVENT IT WAS RECENT.

4. ASKED TO SPECULATE WHY SOVIETS MAY HAVE BROUGHT NEW PROPOSALS, TALEB REPLIED THAT A) SOVIETS WANTED TO SHOW THE U.S. AT TIME OF PRESIDENT'S MOSCOW VISIT THAT POSSIBILITY OF SINO-SOVIET RAPPROCHEMENT STILL EXISTED; AND B) PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANTLY TO SHOW OTHER COMMUNIST PARTIES THAT PERSISTENCE OF SINO-SOVIET SPLIT WAS NOT FAULT OF SOVIET POLICY. IN ANY EVENT, ESSENTIAL CHINESE DEMAND FOR WITHDRAWAL OF TROOPS FROM BORDER IN DISPUTED AREAS STILL REMAINED.

5. ALSO ON SUBJECT OF SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS, TALEB REPORTED THAT SOVIET AMBASSADOR TOLSTIKOV HAD RECENTLY BEEN TO THE PRC FOREIGN MINISTRY ABOUT HELICOPTER CASE AND MADE TWO REQUESTS: ONE, THAT HELICOPTER AND CREW BE RETURNED, AND TWO, THAT HE OR SOMEBODY ELSE FROM SOVIET EMBASSY BE ALLOWED TO SEE THE CREWMEN. TOLSTIKOV RECEIVED REPLY THAT CHINESE WERE STILL PREPARING DOSSIER IN HELICOPTER INCIDENT, 8.E. CASE HAD NOT COME UP FOR JUDGMENT, AND THAT CREWMEN WERE BEING TREATED VERY WELL SO TOLSTIKOV DIDN'T NEED TO SEE THEM.

6. AT VARIANCE WITH TALEB'S ACCOUNT OF MODIFICATION IN CHINESE POSITION, USLO OFFICER WAS TOLD ALSO ON JULY 11 BY SOVIET IST SECRETARY LYATOKHO CHINESE WERE STILL STANDING FIRM ON REQUIREMENT THAT SOVIETS ADMIT RUSSIAN HAD OBTAINED TWO AREAS (ONE OF ONE MILLION SQUARE KILOMETERS AND ONE OF 40PPP SQUARE KILOMETERS) VIA UNEQUAL TREATIES. LYATOKHO SAID THAT SOVIETS HAD TRIED TO SHOW BY CHINESE MAPS AND TREATIES SIGNED BY CHINESE OFFICIALS THAT THIS WAS NOT THE CASE. HE NOTED THAT DISCUSSIONS REMAINED DEADLOCKED OVER THIS ISSUE.

7. LYATOKHO SAID FURTHER THAT "CONCRETE AND CONSTRUCTIVE" PROPOSALS ON BORDER PUT FORWARD BY SOVIETS INCLUDE A) AGREEING TO DEMARCAT E BORDER WHERE NO CONFLICTING CLAIMS EXIST, LEAVING PROBLEM AREAS TO BE DISCUSSED LATER; B) OFFERING TO DREDGE

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RIVER CHANNEL IN KHABAROVSK AREA TO PERMIT CHINESE VESSELS TO PASS DURING LOW WATER PERIODS; AND C) ALLOWING CHINESE VESSELS TO RUSSIAN CHANNEL DURING LOW WATER PERIODS UPON PRIOR NOTIFICATION. CHINESE HAVE REFUSED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THESE POINTS.

8. COMMENT: ALGERIAN AMBASSADOR ENJOYS GOOD ACCESS TO BOTH CHINESE AND SOVIETS (HIS REMARKS ABOUT SOVIET POSITION

PROBABLY CAME FROM TOLSTIKOV PERSONALLY) AND FROM HIS WORDS
IT SEEMS POSSIBLE TO US THAT BOTH SOVIETS AND CHINESE MAY HAVE MADE
SOME SEMANTIC ADJUSTMENTS AND PERHAPS A FEW MINOR SUBSTANTIVE SHIFTS
IN THEIR ORIGINAL POSITIONS SO AS NOT TO APPEAR INFLEXIBLE. THIS
WOULD BE PARTICULARLY TRUE IN LIGHT OF SOVIET EFFORTS TO
ORGANIZE WORLD COMMUNIST CONFERENCE. AS FOR CONTINUED HARD
CHINESE LINE PORTRAYED BY LYATOKHO, IT WOULD CERTAINLY BE TO SOVIET
ADVANTAGE TO LEAVE IMPRESSION THAT CHINESE AND NOT SOVIETS
WERE THE INFLEXIBLE ONES.
HOLDRIDGE

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